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July 1961

STATEMENT OF SENATOR MIKE MANSFIELD (D., MONTANA)

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THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY DURING THE NEXT TEN YEARS

(For the Los Angeles Times)

The role of the Democratic Party during the next ten years will be to continue to recognize significant changes in the state of human affairs, both at home and abroad, and to lead the nation in adjusting public policies to meet these changes for the benefit of ever-increasing numbers of Americans. That has been the Democratic Party's basic role throughout history. Traditionally, Democrats have looked to yesterday for inspiration but they have acted on the needs of today and tomorrow. The Party is not likely to depart from this tradition in the decade ahead.

Massive changes in human affairs continue to accumulate at an enormous rate both at home and abroad. Vast industries such as those in nuclear power, communications, space exploration, unknown a few years ago, are springing up all over the landscape. Others are losing much of their significance and are disappearing from many parts of the land. Millions of citizens shift location within our borders every year. Our population grows at a very high rate, putting new and enormous pressures on all public services.

Automation brings a distant vision of a fuller and more satisfying life but in the meantime the shadow of technological unemployment haunts millions of citizens. Leisure time increases and much of it is spent by families in parks, wilderness and shore areas and other recreational areas no longer adequate for recreation. Better education becomes a necessity for every boy and girl at a time when our expanding population is already taxing existing educational facilities far beyond their capacities.

If we look abroad, moreover, we see a similar pattern of enormous and accumulating change. Countless new nations have struggled out of the byways of history into independence and are intent upon rapid progress. Expanding systems of hostile political power have been formed in Eastern Europe and in Asia. The Nuclear Age has introduced an overwhelming factor into the equation of peace and war; but we have scarcely had time to fathom the implications of this factor when we find ourselves crossing the threshold of the Age of Space.

These are but an indication of the changes which confront us at home and abroad. It serves no useful purpose to ignore them, to pretend that they are not taking place. We have only to look around us, and note the changes in the simple things of everyday life to realize their content. They add up to an increasing complexity of life which will not be made to go away by contemplating with longing to a more placid past which is no more.

Democrats look to that past not to escape from today's realities but for guidance on how to meet them. When we look back in this fashion, we see a Jefferson who was not unwilling to execute the Louisiana Purchase and so change the fate of a continent and a people. We see a Lincoln unafraid to act to terminate slavery and so give us an inseparable union. We see an earlier Roosevelt prepared to do battle with concentrations of unbridled power. We see a Wilson with a vision of universal peace, exhausting himself in the service of humanity.

We see a later Roosevelt determined that poverty shall not flourish in the midst of plenty in this land, a Roosevelt acting to revitalize the economic life of a nation sunk desperately in depression. We see action to make home ownership possible for the millions, action to reduce the distress of unemployment, action to restore a lost dignity to labor and small business, action to make the lives of our older citizens a little more secure, and action to lead the nation victoriously through its greatest military challenge from tyranny.

I have named both Republicans and Democrats in the above list of leaders. Neither party enjoys a monopoly of great leadership. Both parties have at different times shown capacity for both innovation and consolidation. But it is accurate and fair to say, I believe, that the Democratic Party in recent decades has inherited in far greater measure the tradition of American willingness to face the challenge of change and to act on it. To provide leadership in that tradition will remain the predominant role of the Democratic Party during the next ten years.